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Configuration innovation

787 Dreamliner Gallery lets customers easily select configurations

By JENNIFER GERMAN

The team charged with building the 787 Dreamliner Gallery was given a challenging task: Create a new facility, unlike anything Boeing has done before, that would let 787 customers visit a single place to make all their configuration decisions for their Dreamliners.

Previously, airlines would visit supplier facilities around the world to view and compare seats, galleys and other components that comprise their airplane configuration. For example, a customer who wished to see and compare all of the seats in the 787 catalog would have to visit supplier facilities in Italy, France, Germany,

the United Kingdom, Japan and the United States.

But with the 787, customers need only visit the new facility in Everett, Wash., to experience offerings from the seven seat suppliers in the 787 catalog, all of which will be precertified.

“Our primary goal in developing the 787 Dreamliner Gallery was to simplify and streamline configuration processes for our airline customers,” said Dreamliner Gallery Program Manager Patty Rhodes, who led the creation of the gallery from concept through completion. “By providing airline customers one place to go to see all of the offerings in the 787 catalog and to experience what the 787 has to offer, the Dreamliner Gallery supports the 787’s standardization effort.”

Airlines see the benefits of this streamlined approach. “Today, configuring an aircraft for an airline can be time consuming, costly and, in some cases, risky due

The Dreamliner Gallery represents an innovative approach for airline customers to configure Boeing 787 airplanes by centralizing configuration activities and providing “one-stop” shopping.

to certification efforts,” said Terry Eastley, senior vice president, Aircraft Specification & Material Management at International Lease Finance Corporation. “The 787 Gallery makes the selection process more efficient. This is truly the first of its kind in the aviation industry.”

Rhodes led a cross-functional team that gathered all of the 787 catalog offerings, including galleys, seats, in-flight entertainment, emergency equipment, fabrics and other offerable components. The team developed and built an attractive 54,000-square-foot facility (5,000 square meters), designed with renewable materials, to house all these items.

“We wanted to offer our customers a comfortable environment to review their options and make configuration decisions,” said Rhodes. “To truly enhance the configuration experience, we included two ‘home bases’—areas that provide customers a private place to call their own while configuring their airplanes.”

In addition to providing increased comfort and ease of use, the 787 Dreamliner Gallery offers customers greater functionality. Showrooms featuring the various 787 components include elements that further enable customers to compare and make informed configuration decisions.

For example, the galley showroom includes a host of galley inserts such as coffee makers and ovens that airline customers can see, touch and even operate in a fully functional kitchen equipped with the same levels of power found on an airplane. The room also includes a full-scale cross section of the 787 with forward, mid and aft galley shells so customers can easily visualize the space around the galleys. A full-height screen allows customers to see their galley virtually in order to test ergonomics and get a complete understanding of the galley layout they select.

The seats and in-flight entertainment showroom features rows of precertified first-, business- and economy-class seats. The room enables customers to view and compare seat and in-flight entertainment options. In addition, the seats are on actual 787 seat tracks so they can be repositioned to reflect variations in seat pitch.

Other showrooms include a crew rest and systems area that contains mockups of the flight deck and cabin-crew rest area. Additionally, a full-scale cabin mockup will allow airlines to see firsthand what various options actually look like in the airplane. For instance, customers can upload their lighting preferences from the lighting lab and view them in an airplane interior environment. A furnishings section includes partitions, emergency equipment and other interior components for airlines to view and select.

The virtual backbone of the Dreamliner Gallery is an innovative, three-dimensional configuration tool called eConfig. Showrooms include computers for customers to upload their preferences to eConfig, where customers can “walk” through virtual space and change every cabin layout, seat and galley with the click of a mouse.

eConfig provides customers with an immediate virtual view of their configuration decisions, and their selections are automatically integrated with 787 engineering, manufacturing and operations.

“eConfig offers airlines unprecedented power to quickly and easily select features to meet operational requirements and provide brand differentiation,” said eConfig Project Leader Howard Mitchell. “It’s a case of using the right technology and the right platform to improve the customer experience.”

The Dreamliner Gallery was unveiled to airlines, financiers, partners and media in December, and customers began configuring their 787s in the gallery last month. Customer responses to the facility have been enthusiastic.

“International Lease Finance Corporation leases aircraft worldwide, and we are very excited to add the 787 to our fleet portfolio,” said ILFC’s Eastley. “We at ILFC—along with our global airline customers—look forward to utilizing this gallery and the eConfig tool on our upcoming 787 programs.” ■

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Dreamliner Gallery Program Manager Patty Rhodes (left) highlights features in the seats and in-flight entertainment showroom to Thad Dworkin, Sales Program Manager, Greater China Sales for Boeing. The Dreamliner Gallery was unveiled to airlines, financiers, partners and media in December.

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